

A  
NOVELTY:  
Or, a Government of  
WOMEN,  
DISTINCT FROM  
MEN,  
Erected amongst some of the People, call'd  
QUAKERS.  
DETECTED

In an Epistle, occasionally written to a *Man-fudge*, upon  
a Young Man's refusing (for good Conscience sake) to submit to  
their Authority in Marriage, seeing that Relations and Friends  
were already satisfied.

To which is added,

A Lamentation for the Fall of so many of that People.

Published for no other end, but to deter all honest Hearts  
of the said People, from erecting the like *Unscriptural Government*. Tho'  
this may not so far prevail with such *Women* as has a secret Command of  
their Husbands Purse; together with those Preachers that reap Profit  
by such a *Female Government*. as to consent to the Disannulling the same.

Written by *William Mather*, a dear Lover of the said People, who has for  
several Years been much troubled, that some of them should fall from their *Primitive In-*  
*stitution*, as to set up *Women's* and *Men's* Meetings, as Guides in Government, seeing God  
has placed the civil Magistrates over us, *Rom. 13.*

MIRROR of POLICY.

No honest Married Wife is to deal in the Affairs of the *Common-wealth*, much less to  
meddle with the making of *Marriages*, unless for her own Children and Servants, wherein  
she must also refer her self to the discretion of her Husband, lest she incur the name of a  
*Harebrain*.

Cease ye from *Man*, whose Breath is in his Nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of. *Isa. 2 22.*

LONDON: Printed for *Sarah Howkins*, in *George-yard, Lombard-street.*

22

JOHN  
W. O'NEILL  
M. F. M.  
QUAKER

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M. F. M.  
QUAKER  
1000 M. Street for Spring Building in large  
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A

# NOVELTY, &c.

Reader,

**T**O use as few Words as I can, behold a Copy of the Certificate, or Letter from one of the Judges, from a Monthly Meeting in Huntingdon-shire, where the Young Man dwelt, to a Monthly Meeting in Bedford-shire, where the Maid dwelt.

Ramsey, 3d. of the 5th. M. 94.

Friends in Bedford-shire,

**H**ERE came Stephen Scarborough, † to acquaint Friends of his † who keep a little Grose Shop at Brantton, a Mile from Huntingdon. Intention of Marriage with Marry Samm, Daughter of Nathaniel Samm, of Litlington, in Bedford-shire; as also he did to our Quarterly Meeting about a Month ago, and Friends did tenderly advise him to acquaint our Women Friends therewith, who attend Meetings to serve Truth in their Day Age, and Generation, and to enquire, and see that things be clear on all parts on so weighty a Concern as Marriage; but he refusing to follow Friend's Advice herein, I know not what the Women-Friends may have to say in this Matter: Now I being one that have had some Exercise and Concern in these our Meetings, I do testify, That that Spirit that doth oppose the good Order in publishing Marriage in Men and Women's Meetings, is not of God, and am sorry for the Young Man, and desire he may live to see his Weakness, and amend; so with Love to all Friends of Truth, rest a Friend to the same Truth.

Tobias Hardmeat.

After the Young Man had carried the Letter above, with a Certificate, to a Monthly Meeting in Bedford-shire, with other Hands to it, which Tobias would not sign with his Brethren, (he not being at Unity with them in that;) my House being in the Young Man's way home, call'd at my House, and there happen'd to take it out of his Pocket, said to me, Friends gave it me again, and he laid it down; he being gone, I perused it pritty well,

well, and soon perceived it came from an Imposing Spirit, such a one as has bred all the Division and Troubles amongst Friends: Therefore in hopes to a little moderate this severe Judge, I write the following Letter unto him, (except the Margent) ~~was~~

Friend *Tobias Hardmeat*, Communicate this to thy Brethren of the Monthly Meeting in *Huntington*.

**W**HEN thou was at my House, the 17th day of the last Month, \* thou said'st to me; There was no imposing upon any Person that came into your Meetings of Government, or words to that purpose; if you are not Imposers, I must confess I am mistaken.

Thy Certificate † of the 3d. Instant makes it more manifest concerning a young Man's refusing to mention his Intention of Marriage first of all to the Judgment of your *Women's Meetings*; and because ( for good Conscience sake) he could not do it, thou judgeth him weak, and need of Amendment; judging also all other People that do oppose, or that submit not to a *Female Authority* in Marriage, *Not to be of God*, then of the Devil: An uncharitable Sentence.

At Monthly Meeting, when they knew, or might have known that day, the Couple was innocent; but he must, tho' he dwells about sixteen Miles off, and must hire a Horse.

Can there be greater Imposers in the World, than those that judge all People, *Not to be of God*, for not submitting to a *Female Government* in Marriage? A thing never heard of, but of late Years, except the Government of the *Amazons*, who were not so Censorious upon the account of Marriage.

Or Letter. The Words in the Certificate. †

I do testify, That that Spirit that doth oppose the good Order in publishing Marriages in Men and Womens Meeting, is not of God.

Again, And am sorry for the young Man, and desire he may live to see his Weakness, and amend.

Again, saist thou, I know not what the Women-Friends may have to say to this Matter; (that is) his Non submission to a Meeting of Women, distinct from Men.

I do greatly desire to hear how they do to bear it, that a Young Man should refuse to submit to their Authority.

Yet should be very glad to hear also, that a Meeting of *Women* had received power from God; so as to prevail with a Maid, or Married Woman (that comes to them for Counsel) to forsake *Pride*, \* and Excess in Meat, Drink, Apparel, and Furniture.

Oh! The *Judges*, especially at *London*, that has not yet prevailed with Maids, to hide those hollow places they use, as room for Topknots on their Foreheads.

And



And whether such *Women-Judges* ever did any Good, who come into the Seat of *Counsel*, ruffling in gaudy flower'd Stuffs, or Silks, from Top to Toe, mincing with their Feet, &c. except their Gifts to the Poor.

But to be brief, because I am not for raising Chollar in any, yet I hope I need not fear it in thee, and am sure thou wilt not be angry with me, if thou art built upon that *Rock*, that neither Storms, nor any other thing can move to Passion.

He that's built on the *Rock*, Christ, nothing will move to Passion.

Therefore, to ease me of the Burthen which now is upon my Spirit, I shall give thee my Opinion, and then cease at this time; for it is not becoming a true Christian to delight in Contending, or be troublesome to a Congregation; yet those that shall force me to confess that I err in what I write, (before I see it my self) are the *Imposers*.

\* And has been some Years.

My Opinion is this, by way of Advice; When a Couple shall come to your private Monthly Meeting in *Huntington*, to acquaint you of their Intentions of Marriage, say to them, as to the antient *Christian Quakers*.

† From a weak one; yea, one of the most despised in *Israel*, being not a *Conformist*.

Friends, *Who made us Judges over you?* Go, if you find freedom of Spirit, and publish your Intentions at the end of the Publick Religious Meeting for Worship, to which you belong, or nearest to your Dwelling; \* for they best know whither or no you are clear from all other Engagements in this kind, where you may have a sufficient number of Witnesses at your Certificate.

\* The ancient Practice of Friends.

And that we now let you know, this was the Innocent Practice of our dear deceased Friends in the beginning, when God sent among us, to turn our Minds to Christ's *Inward and Spiritual Grace*, † in each Soul, to be our Guides, not Man.

† Mention'd in the Church of England's Catechism, to be the Substance, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord, being but signs thereof.

Likewise, on the other Hand, say unto this Couple, in the fear of God, Friends, *If you have freedom, and find it's not contrary to the Teachings of Christ's Inward and Spiritual Grace* † in your own Souls.

\* This Decree was made at the Yearly Meeting, 1657: and also in a Quarterly Meeting in the Isle of *Ely*.

Publish your Intentions of Marriage twice in our *Women's Meetings*; and when all the *Women-Judges* think you a fit Match, then you must mention it also twice to us of the *Men's Meeting*, which we think necessary.

† Not caring how it hinders their Business, & Horse-hire.

And that when we, who are most commonly Strangers to your Proceedings, (tho' we are well informed by a Friend, all things are clear on both sides) yet you are to come and wait on us Monthly or Quarterly, until such time, as all the *Women* and *Men* of both Meetings say you may joy in Marriage, for fear you should bring a Scandal upon the Truth, tho' your Dwelling be Twenty Miles off, or more, from hence. †

These two manner of ways of Marriage, we lay before you, chuse which of the two, that answers best to the witness of God in your own Souls; for we are not to be Judges of that.

So we freely leave you to your Choice, \* so as you come together in the fear of God, and we shall think never the worse of you. †

\* The want of this has brought much

Confusion. † How have you hated those that conform'd not.

For we seek God's Glory, not our own; which is according to our first Institution, when first we became a People.

For our Labour is to persuade People to submit to *Christ's Spiritual Government* in their own Souls.

So that as we are not to answer for your Miscarriages, neither are you for ours.

If thou believest I write this to thee, in Enmity to any Person or Persons whatsoever, thy discerning is but weak, so not fit to sit as a Judge in *Israel*.

But hope better things of thee, to whom my true Love is, and to all that do faithfully return to the Truth, as it was amongst Friends, when first the Mockers called us *Quakers*.

Bedford,  
11d. 5m. 94.

I am thy Friend,

*William Mather.*

To which Letter no Answer hath yet been given.

*A Lamentation for the Fall of so many, once Worthies, in  
Spiritual Israel.*

The Author's  
Sorrow.

**O**H! what shall I say, or write unto you, that once run to and fro on Foot from place to place, spending your Time and Strength to turn Peoples Minds into the Centre of their Souls, to *Christ's Inward and Spiritual Grace*, to be their Teacher and Leader into all Truth.

But now, that you should contradict your former Advice, by setting up *Women and Men* Guides over an Innocent People, is greatly to be lamented.

How are you fallen, what Lamentation shall I take up for you?

Oh! that mine Eyes were as a Fountain of Water, that I might weep Day and Night for the Fall of so many, once *Worthies* in *Spiritual Israel*; who were once in that Spirit and Love of Jesus, that they could lay down their Lives to win Souls to God; loved their very Enemies, yea, could forgive the Trespases of a Brother, *seventy times seven*.

*Math. 18. 22.*

O Truth, art  
thou fled to  
Heaven again?  
Is Man's Souls  
too straight to  
contain thee?

But alas, this true Love, or Lamb's Patience is not now to be found on Earth, except amongst a few upright Hearts, that has chosen *Christ's Inward and Spiritual Grace* for their Guide, such can wash the Feet of their Enemies.

Deceive not your selves, for you cannot save your selves; by saying you are in the *Light*, when you envy any Man; for whoever doth, is in *Darkness*, even until now, 1 *Joh. 1. 9*.  
Now

Now let me a little reason with you, Was there not true Love and Charity in general amongst the Professors of the Truth (when all thought themselves Poor and Low in their own Eyes\*) before Ambitious *Women*, and Ambitious *Men*, crept in among you, such I mean that thirsted for Honour and Rule over an Innocent People, *Abfolon* like, saying in Heart, *O that I was a Judge in Israel*, when alas, most of such Judges, have and do busie themselves in judging others for the Moats in their Eyes, when the Beam is still in their own Eyes.

These Lordly Spirits in *Women's Meetings*, and *Men's Meetings*, would have an Innocent People submit to their Rules, Orders and Ceremonies, whither the Parties see it their Duty to obey, or not.

Holding those *Meetings* Monthly and Quarterly in private Rooms (where sometimes there are not above four Persons that take upon themselves to Rule†) and there dispose of such Monies as they collect at the end of Religious Meetings (where the most Givers are) where they ought also to give a publick Account how they disposed of the Money unto the general Givers; but this I never see them do, except the Collection was for a Fire, &c.

It's true, Monies for the Poor were at first (that is) when first God raised us to be a People, (who discovered more of his Love to us, than too many before us in this latter Age.) I say, then Moneys were collected, or freely given always at the end of a Monthly Religious Meeting, where also Marriages was proposed, and there finished in time.

Then why do you (in many places) still hold up the one, and leave the other to the Judgment of *Women's Meetings*, &c.

Whence sprung all the Divisions, Controversies, and separate Meetings for Worship among you.

If not from the severity, acted in the said Meetings for *Government*, whereby have you not attained to such an outward Power and Authority over Innocent People, as to cast a good Man, (that confirms not) out of the favour of your People, and to slight his Testimony for God, and can retain a bad Man (a *Conformist* to your *Womens Meetings*) in favour with your People, yea, and to preach too, tho' a Cast-away.

To bring Presidents, for this would spend too much Time and Paper, (I thank God he has hitherto kept me from bowing to any sort of Image of Man's making.)

But did St. *Paul's* Enemies say, that much Learning had made him mad? Did not the Pope say so by *John Parrot* (when you owned him in the Prison of mad Men at Rome) and did not one of your Preachers say to me, that much Learning has made *Geo. Kieth* mad.

So, by calling before you more than twelve times, to answer at your Court in London. See his Tryals in *Pensilvania*, Sold by *R. Baldwin*. The most hidden way to detame a *Nonconformist*, as has been yet heard of.

Will

\*Have you not forgotten that good Day.

The Heart of Man is deceitful; none can know it, but by the Grace of God.

What is not of Faith is Sin.

† And alas most of them Ignorant ones, not knowing whogave them their usurped Power, yet will be as angry as a *Woman*, if you obey not their Wills, when you come before them.

The Root from whence Contest rises among you.

† Would you not have him

Will you take up those envious Peoples Arguments, to render whom you please odious in the Minds of the Innocent.

But his Works and Service for the *Truth*, as it is in Jesus, will out-live your Malice against him.

Oh! That he, and every one, that truly fears God, may so keep to the measure of Grace,\* given them of God, that no Tryals, of what nature soever, may ever separate them from the Love of God; (if so) then I am sure they will envy none, tho' a great Enemy; I say, God has kept me in the Spirit of Love to all (praised be his Name for it) tho' I have been convince'd about forty Years, that the *Quaker's* Fundamental Principle of Christ's *Light* and *Grace*, being the chief *Leader* and *Guide* into all *Truth*, is a *Truth*, which will abide for ever.

\* In what may Man be preserved from Enemies, that he shall not be hurt. He that dwells in Love to all, dwells in God.

And no Man, either by Conversation or Preaching, made me joyn with them; it was God alone that shewed me that they were in the right way then, for I often prayed to God† to discover to me which was the right way to Heaven, and he directed me to them, when I knew nothing of them, but the name *Quaker*, whom I sought out\*, and found them, and suffered many Buffittings and Stonings, and Imprisonments with them, which was Joy unspeakable unto me, that I had found a People, whose Trust was alone in God. Oh! how my Soul was knit unto them; I could have died at a Stake with them then, if it had been the Will of God. Oh! my Heart is broken, as into Tears, that this People should so soon let go their true Guide, Christ's *Inward and Spiritual Grace*, and set themselves up as Guides.

† Being young, and then dwelt in Holdenly, in Northamptonshire, knowing of none, call'd a Quaker.

\* By enquiring of Labourers, that I set to work, who told me there was none followed them but poor Men, as Weavers, &c. The Author could never joyn with their outward Government.

† See the Ep. of J. Crook, and Abo. Green, to the Young, convinced, and Truth's Progress. By J. Crook.

I must confess, I have been at two of these Meetings of Government, but it was accidentally; the one was in *Huntingtonshire*, the other in *Bedfordshire*; in both which, I saw so much of the Imperiousness of those that made themselves Judges, that I could never after find Freedom in Spirit to go to any more, and did largely write a Testimony against it, but never had an Answer, and rested in the Will of God; but now I am constrained to write, in hopes the Innocent may see to the beginning, and the danger of any People, that swerves from their first Institution.†

Again, From whence arise all the publick Clashings of one Minister against another, if not from those Lordly Spirits, that will rule in such Meetings, too publickly known, both to Profess or Prophane? that a Priest once writ to me, *That the Light was not now the Quaker's Guide, it's their Meeting at Devonshire House*, the Rise too of those Arbitrary Meetings in the Country.

Oh! Ye degenerate from your first Institution; you I say, that are resolved to govern Arbitrarily, and not leave the honest Souls among you, to be ruled by *Christ's Inward and Spiritual Grace*, to which you have so often advised them to follow, as a most sure Guide, and will not suffer them, by the Leadings of that, to choose who shall be their Arbitrators, for them in Marriage, if you can hinder them. If

Arbitrary Government.



If you resolve to carry it by a Ruling Hand over the Innocent, ( contrary to your Principles. )

Take no more upon you the Name of *Children of the Light*, \* as G. F. and E. H. calls you in their *Primmer*, seeing you are fallen, into the same Snare ( in Church-Government ) as others before you, whom you did condemn for such things.

Oh! How dare you give positive Judgment against any person ( in things, not sinful against God ) seeing that one of the greatest Writers, to promote your Authority, ( otherwise was a very worthy Man, ) had not yet attained to Infallibility or Perfection, saying, " Others may perhaps speak more certainly of this State ( Perfection ) as have arrived to it; for me, I shall speak modestly, as acknowledging my self not to have arrived to it. See R. B.'s Works: p. 389.

Oh! Will you continue to be so Cenforious to Judge all People, *not to be of God*, that take not Counsel of Women's Meetings, before Marriage.

My Soul has often mourned for you, and often desired of God, That he would be pleased to discover to me, Whether or no, I am to blame in thus writing to you, and have found nothing but peace therein, and good Will to all Men, and can ( through God's Mercy ) give my Bread freely to mine Enemy, and serve all mine Enemies, ( if I have any ) in what I can, GOD knows I Lye not; for I truly Love all the Works of his Hand, and am very sensible, that those that do envy any Man, ( let his Transgressions be never so great ) *is not of God*, profess what they will in Religion.

Had not our dear Saviour Love and Mercy for one that had Seven Devils? And shall not those that profess to be his Disciples have the same Love to all? Because no Man dwells in God, no longer than he dwells in Love to all; overcoming Evil by the good Grace of Christ Jesus.

But to come somewhat nearer: Has not God enlightened your Candle? Then why do you set Self-Exaltation before it? For the Love you have to Rule, by your means over Innocent Hearts.

But I still hope that the young Convinced will see ( by that Light of God's Grace, he has given them ) to the Beginning, That we were at first a harmless and innocent People, and was not for Self-Exaltation.

Oh! ye arbitrary Judges, what think you? Was not that eminent Man, W. P. ashamed to mention this frivolous Government of Women, in Page 31. of his *Key*? Wherein he omits not your other Meetings for Government ( to please you that Love Dominion ) was he not? I saw, *See W. P.'s Key, p. 31.* wife in that, fearing ( I suppose ) the World would Laugh at it, as indeed well they might, having never heard before, that a Meeting of Women must be advised with, before Marriage, yea, before a Meeting of Men and Women together, and the Refusers to be Judged of the Devil.

\* For that leads to Peace on Earth, and Good-Will to all Men.

He that is without sin, let him cast the first Stone.

Perfection is attainable in this Life, thro' Obedience to God's Grace.



The Author is constrained to write, having borne long.

God's Love is unto all the Works of his Hand.



Do not you  
yet see your  
Apostasy.

And the greatest wonder of all is, That such a Government should be praised amongst a People that profess, that every Individual Man and Woman should have no other Guide, besides Christ's *Inward* and *Spiritual* Grace.

\*The best Ar-  
gument that  
ever they  
could give for  
Womens  
Meetings.

But if you now say to me, as G. F. said to me and T. H. in a Discourse with him, till near Mid-night, about the said Arbitrary Government, *You do not deserve to have Wives*, (saith he) \* *you speak so much against Women*. To say the Truth, this was the best Argument he could give us, for his unscriptural Female Government.

Though its well known, we love our Wives as true Christians ought to do.

Nor are we against a Woman's Declaring in a Religious Meeting, what God has done for her Soul, by silently waiting at the Feet of Jesus, as Mary did, (that is) in his *Inward* and *Spiritual* Grace.

Nor are we against Women meeting by themselves; upon a particular occasion, but not monthly for Government.

Nor are we against Men's Meetings upon urgent Occasion, between themselves, so as they Judge no other Person or Persons, who has not chosen them Judges or Arbitrators.

The Civil Ma-  
gistrates are  
not to be re-  
jected, who in-  
deavour to  
preserve us in  
Peace.

Seeing God has placed the Civil Magistrates over us, to whom we are to submit in all things, that's not contrary to the Conscience, which is Rectified by God's Grace, Rom. 13.

Oh! Call to mind the Severity of that Spirit, that has, and still doth act in too many of you.

You create  
Opposers, by  
your unfaith-  
fulness.

How many Souls have you, as it were, slain by Judging, and thereby driven into the troubled Sea of Man's Wrath, and being so driven by you thither (you laying aside Christ's Love) can do no other than oppose you, then you do truly call them Apostates, when you were the Cause for want of Love.

None can no  
longer stand  
faithful, than  
their Eye is to  
God's Grace.  
Your Acing  
have barr'd  
many Souls  
from owning  
the Truth, and  
has given  
strength to the  
Atheists.

Though the Truth is, they were to blame also themselves, because they let go the Strength they had in God's Grace, and so suffered Man's Wrath and Envy to separate them, from the Love of God in Christ Jesus, through your Censors.

The present  
Civil Magi-  
strates have  
our done you  
in Love to a'.

Likewise, how many Souls, by your Imperious Government, have you barr'd from Inquiring after the Truth, is too well known to some.

Oh! unnatural, not to give that Liberty to some, called with you *Quakers*, (in things not sinful) as the present Civil Magistrates gives us all. This is not doing as you would be delt by. Think you, that God will not Judge you for these things? Let Self-Interest no longer blind your Eyes.

Oh! the Cruelty of this imposing Spirit (when God does not chain it down) how many Thousands of Souls and Bodies has it destroyed, which no Man can number; being yet lodged in the hearts of Ambitious Women,

**Women, and Ambitious Men:** the same Spirit it is, that now judges all The Cruelty of  
of the Devil, that conforms not to their Wills, Orders, Ceremonies, &c. an imposing

Will you not yet say, that such Priests are more to be commended, Spirit.  
than you, who do not impose upon a Couple (that are about to marry) Some Priests  
any Ceremonies against their Consciences. out-do you in

How often have you troubled a Couple, for refusing to submit to a Love.  
*Female Government* in Marriage, and enjoying some, scarce of Ability  
to travel many Miles, and often (at their own charge) to your private  
*Women's Meetings*, and *Men's Meetings*, which have been so wearied with  
Journeys, and needless Delays, (tho' Relations were satisfied) who to  
rid themselves of the trouble of waiting upon you any longer, have gone  
to a Priest upon the account of Marriage.

Then have you not presently judged them gone from the *Truth*, ha- Judging all  
ving recorded some (as I am inform'd) *Apostates* to Generations to come, not of God, as  
for so doing, that obeyed not your Wills in *Men's Meetings*, (when you conform not  
were the cause for their so doing) and will not own them of the *Truth*, to Women's  
until such time as they condemn themselves for so doing. Meetings in

Oh! what a mighty Stress you lay upon the Ceremony of *Women's* Marriage;  
*Meetings* in Marriage, as to account all that oppose, or approve not of it, when the Scri-  
fallen from God. ptures enjoy

When some of you will sometimes say, why do you scruple such an  
indifferent thing, as to propose your Intention of Marriage to a *Woman's* Jesus did not  
*Meeting*, and a *Man's Meeting*; without Women. hate his Bre-

And some again do say, That the Scriptures leaves all People free, as thren that did  
to the manner of their Marriage, so as they enter into that Estate in the not believe in  
fear of God, before sufficient Witnesses. him. Joh. 7. 5.

I do remember, that a Person, one of the greatest Sticklers for the pro- Were you not  
moting of your *Government of Women* and *Men's Meetings*, once said to blind, to say  
me, *It was the everlasting Government, of which there would be no end*; but your Govern-  
since (thro' God's Mercy) his Eyes are opened, and now plainly sees it ment would  
has been the Root, from whence so many Divisions has sprung among stand for ever.  
you the said Person, has not yet lost, being call'd a *Quaker*.

I have asked some Couples, newly married, why they did propose their  
Intention of Marriage to a *Meeting of Women*, and then to a *Meeting of Men*,  
knowing the trouble that others have gone through, by so doing, seeing  
you knew you were clear from all Engagements to any other in this  
Kind, and that your Relations and Friends had been long satisfied? Did  
not you know it was Friend's Practice in the beginning, to mention their  
Intentions at the end of several *Religious Meetings*; and if none oppose  
justly, then might enter into that State, by speaking fit Words at the  
end of another *Publick Religious Meeting*. The weakness  
of such Cou-  
ples as go to  
marry at a pri-  
vate Women's  
Meeting, and  
Mens Meeting.

There Answer was always to me to this effect:

For fear of displeasing you, how many Couples has conformed against Conscience.

Your own Biggers see the trouble of waiting upon you.

A frivolous Argument.

*We thought it a very hard Tryal, that after all things was agreed on for Marriage, to begin again to mention it to a Woman's Meeting; (most Strangers) and after they were satisfied, then to go to a Man's Meeting, to wait for their Consents: But this we did, contrary to our Freedom, that they might not think ill of us.*

You can scarce ask one Couple among you, but will give an Answer much to the same effect; which by this may easily be seen what Dominion you exercise over the Innocent, that to keep favour with you, must leave their Inward Guide to please you.

But to plead for your new Arbitrary Government, some of you do say, That in the beginning, a Couple has come rudely into a Meeting, and said they took each other as Man and Wife, and so brought a Scandal upon us.

See the true Christians Rules, as to Church-Government in the 4th. Edit. of *The Young Man's Companion*, not written to enjoin others to obey, but left to the witness of God in all People.

How I was married, and many others.

What then? Is there never a wise Man among you, or Woman, in a Religious Meeting, that can say to such a Couple, you ought to give the Meeting time to make Inquiry whether you are clear from all Engagements in this Kind to any other Person or Persons, and we shall do our Endeavour to resolve you next first day; for here's none that desires to put you off from time to time, by needless Delays; and as soon as we find you are honest, and are for coming together in the fear of the Lord, we shall freely set our Hands to a Certificate of the Lawfulness of your Marriage; at the end of a Religious Meeting, the more publick the better, nor will we send you many Miles to a Meeting of a few Women, (who may be Strangers to you) and they to send you, when they think Good to a private *Man's Meeting*, who may tell you, that if you will not submit to our Orders, we shall not stand by you in Tryals, &c. but shall begin and end your Marriage at the nearest Religious Meeting, where you are best known, which was the innocent Practice of our dear deceased friends at first? I was married so, without any Opposition; for then, neither *Women-Judges*, nor *Men-Judges* in private Rooms was set up.

Now, because some may be ready to say, we know of no such Law or Decree that enjoins a Couple to go twice to propound their Marriage to a private *Women's Meetings*, and twice to a private *Men's Meeting*, here follows the Copies of two of them.

*From a Yearly Meeting in London, the 27th. of the 3d. Mon. 1675.*

Two new Laws established.

IT is our Judgment, that for better Satisfaction to all Parties, that there may be due time for Inquiry of clearness of the Persons concerned, it is convenient that Marriage be at twice propounded to the Meetings that are to take care therein, both to the *Men's* and *Women's Meetings*, where both

both are established before they are accomplished ; and when things are cleared, that the Marriage be accomplished in a Grave, and publick Assembly of Friends and Relations.

*Another Decree upon Record.*

**T**Hat for Time to come, no Friends may permit, or suffer Marriages, without the Consent of Friends at two Men's, and two Women's Meetings, being distinct, and apart each from other. To mention more Decrees to this purpose, is needless.

But the Women in London, you may be sure was glad of their Exaltation (in finding that the Men had prefer'd them to be sought too first; upon the account of Marriage.) †

And finding the sweetness of Ruling did (together with Men) judge all in the Country as *Libertines*, that conform'd not to the Decrees, and do judge such to this day, as one of their formal Preachers, T. R. One of like G. F.'s Priest-Threshers said to me; *You in this Country are of a Libertine Spirit, and an indifferent People, only because (for good Conscience sake) we did not set up Womens Meetings.* (Our Women are wiser here.)

Tho' it is true, some of this County has so far conform'd to the Decrees, as to set up *Men's Meetings*, Monthly and Quarterly for Government, (which is one in Nature, to the other needles.)

Yet tho' some say such Meetings are very useful in the City (where the Women dwell near together) tho' not so useful in the Country, dwelling so far asunder.

I say, they are needful no where to be observed Monthly, because thereby they become proud of the Authority.

For if a Marriage is intended to be propounded at the end of a Religious Meeting, (to prevent Lordship\*) and the Meeting happen to be a great one, (as is commonly in London) the Man himself, or he may desire a Friend to declare at the end of the Meeting, that here is one that desires to publish his Intention of Marriage; and if the People are for going away, you may call as many People as are free to draw into the next Room, and there publish it, both Men and Women being together. This done, some of the Meeting may tell the Man, that if he comes next first Day, they will resolve him, according to what Inquiry they have made, and as soon as we find you are clear from all Engagements of this Kind to any other Person or Persons, you may take each other as Man and Wife, before as many Witnesses as you please, the more, the better; for such Concerns cannot be too publick, &c.

This I write from the Innocency of my Soul, (not as a Law for others) but this way may prevent the Insulting of Ambitious Men and Women, (who do pretend better things in Words) who delight in Domini-

† Did not Calamity, that the Dames of Rome became their Husbands. It is strange (saith he) that those who commanded the World should yet be subject to Women. See W. P.'s No Cross no Crown, P. 281.

Women's Meetings Monthly no where creditable.

\* Which is the delight of the Ambitious that love Domination.

The right Order of Marriage.

Let God's Witnesses judge whether this is not most agreeable to the Truth which we profess.

I am not for enjoying a Rule for any,

on,

on, and are so confident as to say, We dispise Dignities or Government, in not submitting to these unscriptural Government of *WVomen* and *Men's Meetings*.

*Obj.* Some may say, What art thou also against our Men's meeting Monthly for Government; for did not the *Apostles* advise to choose Elders? &c.

*Ans.* I am not against the Meetings of such Elders, for the innocent to advise with, as the *Apostle* would have chosen; that is, such as are Meek in Heart, Lowly in Spirit, Chaste in Life, Virtuous in all Conversation, full of Self denial, Long-Suffering, and Patient; not only forgiving, but loving their very Enemies; one that rules his Children, and his own House well; his Wife (if any) grave, (not proud, nor slanderous) sober and faithful in all things, 1 *Tim.* 3. 4. 2 *Tim.* 2. 24.

Now I appeal to every Conscience that is cleansed by God's Grace, whether if any Man take upon himself to be an Elder, or Teacher in a Meeting, and is not qualified as aforesaid, be not a *Usurper*.

God, in Mercy to the Innocent, has often curb'd the said Imposing Spirit, and will more and more, I doubt not, chain it down for ever; which he has already (in Mercy) done out of many Souls, praised be his Name for it.

God is a zealous God, he will not give his Honour to a Meeting of *WVomen*, or *Men's Judges*, (having committed all Judgment in things relating to a good Conscience unto his Son Christ Jesus) and so far has begun to open the Eyes of his faithful People, that they shall not be so blind to believe that a very large Meeting of *WVomen* or *Men*, can give an Infallible Judgment in things that others shall be bound to believe and obey, as to a Ceremony, or the Judging of a Man, *Not to be of God*, when they have not proved he has sinned against God.

For if the greatness of the Assembly must carry it (as one of your Preachers said to me, *how could such a number be mistaken?*) Then the *Turks* or *Papists* cannot number you in Assemblies.

But have you not a way beyond all others to exercise your Authority, most hiddenly, or in the Dark, by sending abroad your Formal Preachers,† that do whisper (where they think they can be credited) into the Ears of poor innocent People, *that such a Man or Men is not right, he doth not own our WVomen's Meetings, &c.* then Prejudice enters.

So that Man or Men, however Just, cannot have their Testimonies for God enter into those prejudiced Spirits, or scarce entertained friendly in some places, upon their travel for poor Soul's sake. Oh! the Ignorance of those People, that has not chosen Christ Grace in them for their Guide, but Man.

What an Elder is, and how to be qualified.

Good Morality is more acceptable to God than Formalists. See P. 58. in the fourth Edition of my Young Man's Companion.

Also see a Character of a True Christian, P. 74.

People will not much longer be blinded by Man; for a great Assembly may err as well as a little one.

A hidden Power to blow up a Man's Reputation.

† Who you ignorantly think all is Gospel they utter, though it is true in public, they declare good Words.



So that by this Secret way of whispering, how soon can you blow up an honest Man's Reputation.†

† Report, and we will report it.

Good God! How long, I pray thee, will it be before the Professors of the Grace that came by thy Son Jesus Christ, be obeyed by them, which teaches true Love to all thy Creation? And as thy Love is to all People, (tho' Sinners) so are thy Followers. Lord, give them to see that they dwell not in the Light, when they envy any People; and also that they may see, that Man is no more to be rely'd on for a Guide, but only thy *Inward and Spiritual Grace*; this I beg of thee, for thy dear Son's *Love* is to whom be given all Honour, Rule and Dominion, now, and for ever, *Amen*.

A Prayer for the Innocent that we love one another, as God loves us all.

If God withdraws from such as cloath themselves with his Gifts, to serve Self-Interest, how much more doth he withdraw his Love from such Ministers, as sordidly conform (against their Consciences) to a *Female Government*,\* that you the Judges might not inscense their Hearers against them, when they travel to win Souls to Righteousness; that the Scriptures might be fulfilled in this Age, (in this) *The Leaders of the People cause them to err*.

\* Such a Test, to try Ministers by, as was never heard of before.

I say, Such Conforming Ministers† against good Conscience, may possibly win some Souls (by their Preachings) to the Form, but not to the Power of Godliness, which Power all do deny, that believe that Christ's *Inward and Spiritual Grace* is not a sufficient Guide to all, without *Women's Meetings* and *Men's Meetings*, to guide the People by, except the Civil Magistrates.

† Conforming Ministers (that is) such a one that designs to take up the whole time of a Meeting, in Speaking, and is offended if another Person takes up some of the time in Speaking; by which the first manifests himself to be out of the Apostle's Practice, 1 Cor. 14. 30. If any thing be revealed, &c.

Oh! what do you advise People to this Grace for, if it must not be their only Teacher; then if the Grace of Christ in them teaches them not conform to your *Women's Meetings*, &c. Can you blame them then?

To draw towards a Conclusion, being it is in vain to spend too much Time and Paper, to discover the Vanity of a *Female Government*, and the Imposing Spirit that now Rules and Reigns in such of you, as set up yourselves Judges over Innocent People; which thing you condemned in Professors before you.

What was the Reason think you that caused our *English* Poetical Prophet *J. Withers*, from joyning to any Religious Society, being asked by a Friend of mine, he said, *They ingendred to Bondage, and to ride over the Minds and Consciences of their Brethren*.

*G. Withers* saw much of an Imposing Spirit in Professors in his day.

Then it seems all the several sorts of Professors before (since the Reformation) were for Imposing upon their Brethren's Consciences, yet it is most to be wonder'd at in you, that profess Christ's *Inward and Spiritual Government*.

All ye that  
love Righte-  
ousness, Christ  
has given you,  
(and all men)  
a Talent of his  
Grace to lead  
you into all  
Truth, so need  
not give Gifts  
to Men to  
teach you.  
Tit. 2. 11.

Let no Man  
beget Preju-  
dice in thee a-  
gainst another.

\* Wherein  
thy strength  
lies, O Man, 2  
Cor. 12. 9. As  
it was for Paul  
when buffeted  
by Satan.

Oh! the Love  
of an honest  
Heart to all  
People is to be  
praised above  
Rubies, &c.

Oh! that all  
Imposers  
might obey  
God's Grace,  
and no longer  
preach from  
Head-know-  
ledge, making  
People believe  
it is as God's  
Spirit gives ut-  
terance.

Therefore, O ye honest and upright Hearts (where-ever dispersed upon the Face of the Earth) who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, that ye might be filled therewith, and that it might fill the Earth, I say, let it be your Cry, as of Old, *To thy Tents*; O Israel! Trust no more in Women or Men as Guides, trust only to that Talent of Christ's Grace in you, that will never deceive you, its always stirring up the mind to good. That will truly teach you your Duty both to God and Man, and to love those that hate you; It brings Salvation, *Tit. 2. 11.* unto all that obey its Reproofs.

Oh! trust not Man, whatever he whispers into your Ears, to prejudice your Minds against any Person upon the Earth.

The Mind going abroad from watching in this *Inward and Spiritual Grace*, is the cause that the Devil gets into the Heart to raise hatred one against another.

But he that keeps his Mind upon the Watch, in this *Tent*, or *strong Tower, the Name of the Lord*, \* neither Men nor Devils can deceive him; and he will truly Love all People, though they are of a different Persuasion to him in points of Religion.

And will the truly Faithful to the Grace of God in themselves, be advising People to obey the same Grace in their own Souls, and will not seek by any means to draw their Minds from the Obedience thereof; fearing they may fall as the young Prophet did, which obeyed the old Prophet, contrary to his own Gift from God, or Message, 1 K. 13. 18.

These honest Souls, that has chosen the good part, God's Grace for their Guide, will envy no couple, that do from a free and willing Mind propound their Intention of Marriage *twice* to a Woman's Meeting, and *twice* at least to a Man's Meeting.

Nor will envy a Couple that does, and thinks it more agreeable to Truth, to propose their Intentions at the end of several Religious Meetings, where Men and Women are met together, seeing the more publick the better satisfaction to all People; that a *Judge* did once acknowledge, that such publick Marriages was lawful.

Oh! that you Imposers would obey, as well as preach up God's Grace, for Peoples Guide; then would you come into the Lamb's patience, into that Love, that overcomes Anger, and forgive your Brethren's Trespases, as you hope God will forgive yours. Preach no more of such Love until you witness it.

I am your Friend, and God knows my heart, I write in love to you: Though some of you, no doubt, will account me your Enemy, for thus telling (in part) how you are fallen from your first Institu-

If I am to blame, pray blame no body else, for no person dictated any thing to me, or put me upon this Work; I do not see that I Err therein.

Yet have I long seen and known, that many honest Hearts have been much grieved to see such an alteration in the Professors of the Truth, to what they were in the beginning, when Innocence and true Love to each other had dominion in the Souls of God's People (that is) before Women and Men set themselves up as Judges in the Meetings fore said.

That you may see your Error, and return to the Truth, as in the beginning, is the desire of your Loving Friend, *William Mather*. I do not take you to be mine Enemies, because I am no Man's Enemy, (praised be God for it,) and that I continue as I have hither been, a Friend to all, a Foe to none.

To conclude, If you say I have been some-what too sharp upon you, I say I have not been so sharp as the Matter of Fact requires.

Have you not trampled under your Feet many Epistles of Love, sent to you, scorning to bait an inch of your Authority, where you can overrule.

Therefore, If you are designed to Answer me, then I desire you to let some Ancient Honest Friend do it, from the Gift of God in himself; and go not down to *Egypt* for help. That is, go not to the *Logicians*, whose cunning *Sophistry* can make a good Cause seem bad, and a bad Cause seem good; I mean such an one as *T. E.* who can by *Sophistry* so multiply Words, as to darken his innocent *Readers*, who is too often made to believe, his Cause must needs be good, his Matter is so long. Alas! How are men deceived in that? *The fewer Words, the more Truth.* And if he, or such as say, I have *Tautologies* \* herein, (a thing most of the Formal Preachers are guilty of, if it be a fault) blame me not for that. For I do not profess my self a Schollar in the Languages, and therefore most fit, that such a Schollar as I should answer me. But if it come to that with you, that Scholarship, Man's Wisdom and Reason must be Judge over such Consciences, as are rectified by God's Spirit, never more blame those cunning Men, that drown'd the *Text*, in the Comment.

Likewise, Have you not often declared to the People, and do daily, that this is the day that ——— *The loftiness of Man shall be bowed down, and the Haughtiness of Man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted, Isa. 2. 17.*

If the Author deserves Blame, he will take all to himself; for his Eyes are blinded, come Dime weeping for you with a true broken Heart, and a contrite Spirit, God only knows, none else at this time.

I write not these things because I think you have me, but because I love you, so do not hate you: If I want love, then let me lose life, if it be the Will of God.

One skilled in the Art of Reasoning or Disputing.

\* a repeating the same thing in other words The Author desires that a Friend in the Truth may Answer his Writing, but no Sophister:

Man must lay down their Crowns at the feet of Jesus.

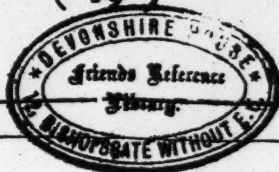
*What Eyes thou read'st with, Reader, know I not,  
Mine were not dry, when I these Failings wrote.*

*Take ye heed every one of his Neighbour, and trust ye not in any Brother ;  
for every Brother will utterly supplant, and every Neighbour will walk with  
Slanders, Jer. 9. 4.*

*Was this Jeremiab's Complaint in his day, the same may be taken up  
this day. Read his 9th. Chapter. Oh! that all may fear before the  
Lord, by obeying his Grace, or Gifts in themselves, that we may all say  
with Holy David, Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace  
have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the Earth, and Righteousness  
shall look down from Heaven, Psal. 85. 10, 11. Amen.*

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Postscript.



# Postscript.

**A**BOUT the 9th. of this Month of September came to my hand, from Tobias Hardmeat, the Letter I sent him (above Printed) with several little Sentences he wrote on the Margent thereof, in Answer to which, take as follows.

T. H. *It's not Imposition, but Advice to good Order.*

*Answer.* Is it not Imposition to brand all as Libertines, Apostates, and not of God, that conform not to your Unscriptural Orders? If you did not compel, none would oppose you. Though I may ask you, From whence you had your Authority, (without Offence, I hope) as you have asked other Religious Societies before you, Why they enjoyn'd unscriptural Orders?

T. H. *That Spirit that opposeth Truth, is curst.*

*Answer.* Dost thou curse me, for opposing a Female Government? If that Authority be thy Truth, thou so often speaks of, then am I an Opposer, and thou an Imposer.

T. H. *Having learned, Therefore I speak and testifie.*

*Answer.* What Spirit has learned thee, to call Women's Meetings the Truth, and to Curse and testifie, That all those that oppose a Female Government, is not of God?

T. H. *To desire a Man's amendment, is to desire his good.*

*Answer.* True. But had the young Man any fault, besides his non submission to a Female Government?



**T. H.** *A Scoff, not solid enough, for one professing Truth.*

*Answ.* What, because I desired thee to let me know how the Women Judges, did to bear it, that a young Man could not own their Authority?

**T. H.** *Its well they do some good, (meaning the Women Judges.)*

*Answ.* That is, their Gifts to the Poor, yea its good in rich Widows, and also in married Women, when their Husbands are incapable to do it themselves; and if that's all the good they do, they had better lay down their Authority, and not leave their business Monthly and Quarterly, to no purpose?

**T. H.** *Its well then hast so much Charity, cherish it, and it may grow.*

*Answ.* Thou praises me for my Charity, in not desiring to stir up Wrath or Choler in thee; but my Charity extends further, for I have all along been very free to entertain any of your formal Preachers, rejoicing at the exaltation of Christ's Grace in each Soul, when they declare the power and virtue thereof, in this dark Town of *Bedford*; but if they build up with one hand, and throw down with the other hand, by setting up other Guides, besides Christ's Grace, they are returned into *Babylon*.

But to the great grief of my Soul, I find, that most of such Teachers, are for Preaching chiefly to such People, as do already witness their true Teacher in themselves, when our dear Saviour respected neither Time or Places, who did instruct the People where they were most Congregated together. And those he now sends forth, would certainly be of the same mind, if his good Spirit was their Guide. If you are not for the Exaltation of Men Judges, why was there about 10 Preachers at one Meeting in *Huntington*, lately, to the grief of some, because *Geo. Whitehead* was there that day.

**T. H.** *I know not any such Imposers amongst us; but submission to the Council of Truth, is good.*

*Answ.* I admire thy Confidence, to say, Thou knowest no such Imposers amongst you. Can you inflict greater punishment upon a Non-Conformist to *Women Counsel*, than to tell their Friends such are Libertines, Atheists, and not of God? Could ever any Imposers go further?

Except

Except they had power to cast into Prison: What is more dear to a Man than a good Name, as to this World?

And I further ask thee, Whether there be any other Truth, besides the Grace of God, in our own Hearts, which we are to submit to?

T. H. *Opinions are too numerous, Truth is one in all.*

*Ans.* If my Opinion, in advising thee and thy Brethren (in the Letter above,) to come to that good Order or Practice of Friends, as in the beginning, was not according to the Truth, (or Grace of God,) why didst thou not disprove it, in this thy pretended Answer.

And as Truth is one in all (as thou sayest) Why do you Judge it in others? But rather leave every one to stand or fall, as they obey it, and if any disobey the Truth, or Grace in themselves; you that are Spiritual, should tell them of it; but force by scandalizing the Disobedient, is not the way to win them to Obedience, to the Truth in themselves?

T. H. *Look into Bedfordshire-Paper of Prescription for Order, and there thou may find good Advice many Years since.*

*Ans.* I know nothing of what's in it: But if any Persons has taken upon themselves to draw Prescriptions or Orders (contrary to the Holy Scriptures) as a Bond upon all others to obey the same, that's nothing to me; I am not to follow a Multitude into Innovations. Our Preachers has already told us, That God's Grace in each Soul, is to be the only Leader into all Truth, which (through God's great Love) is witnessed to be so. So that if they are gone from that, and design to exalt themselves as Guides, we know better things; therefore it is more safer to follow our true and inward Teacher, than weak Man, who is so apt to degenerate from their Primitive Institution.

T. H. *Friend, William Mather, my Advice to thee for Truth sake is, be still and quiet.*

*Ans.* Who can hold their peace, while Women and Men-Judges exalt themselves in Authority, above all that is called good in the Innocent; and while you have your Formal Preachers, (or Spies) to travel through the Nation, whispering into the Ears of poor people, that such and such Persons are fallen from the Truth; when in reality you can find no fault in them, but their Non-conformity to a Female Government, &c.

T. H.

T. H. *And what it is in thee, that fudgeth others.*

*Ans.* As I hear, I fudge. 'Now every Man ought to compare the Doctrine of that Age, wherein he lives; with no other Doctrine, than that which was out of all question spotless, which is the Doctrine of the Apostles. *W. S. Ad. to Protestants*, p. 162.

T. H. *I love not Controversie, but Peace and Truth, and desire therein to grow.*

*Ans.* Neither do I love Controversie; my labour only is that all may lay down their honour at the Foot-stool of Christ's Grace.

T. H. *Our Labour and Travail, in attending our Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, is to preserve and keep, and bring into Order, Christ's Spiritual Government.*

*Ans.* Who was it first that put poor Innocent VVomen upon Travail several Miles Monthly and Quarterly; was it not Ambitious Men? If thou wast not ashamed of their Authority, sure thou wouldest have given me one Scripture proof for it, if thou could. Dost thou think that the VVisdom of VVomen or Men, can bring in Order Christ's Spiritual Government? No, no, It's his Spirit that can only do it.

T. H. *That all may be preserved out of Miscarriages (you set up this Government) and the precious Truth set over all.*

*Ans.* That Christ, the precious Truth, may be set over all, is all that I labour for: If over all, then over all your Meetings of Government.

Can any thing preserve out of Miscarriages, besides God's Grace, the precious Truth?

VVhat is there never a Spiritual-minded Man or VVoman in a Religious Meeting, that sees a Fault in another, that cannot tell the party thereof privately at the end of the Meeting, or go to their Dwellings to tell them of it, *Matt. 18.* but must Summon him, or her, to some little private Meeting Monthly, I know not how many Miles off their Dwellings?

T. H. *Wait in God's Fear, to know thy self.*

*Ans.*

*Ans.* I praise God, he has kept me in his Fear, from my Childhood, and have so far denyed self, that I could not enter into Self-Exaltation, by joyning with your Authority in Government; though I have been often invited so to do.

So that many of you that have Reigned so long, scorn to be told of your Arbitrary proceedings; yea, he that shall but tell you how you err, you will account him an Imposer, though the Name most properly belong to you, as I have before proved it.

Good God! Can we put no Trust in Man? Hast not thou raised up one Religious Society after another, who begun well, whilst they took Counsel only of thy good Spirit in their Hearts, kept their first Love? But its greatly to be lamented, to behold most Societies choose other Governours besides Thy Spirit, and so come to divide, in about Thirty Years after thou hast raised them. O Lord, I pray Thee, look upon this People with an Eye of pity, (to whom thou hast given large gifts,) turn their hearts to Thy Grace, more and more, that they may no longer take Glory to themselves, and pride themselves with thy Jewels, that another People take not their Crowns; for thy dear Son's sake. To whom be all Honour, &c.

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F I N I S.